



“Barbara Vaughn | Optasia” Opens at Quogue Gallery

June 27, 2015

by Sponsors

BARBARA VAUGHN | OPTASIA

June 26, 2015 - July 20, 2015

OPENING RECEPTION: Saturday, July 4, 4-7 p.m.

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ArtHamptons, July 2-5, 2015

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“Vicinato II” by Barbara Vaughn. Archival pigment print, 42 x 56 inches.

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Quogue Gallery has announced the opening on Friday, June 26, of “Optasia,” an exhibition of new works by acclaimed photographer Barbara Vaughn. An opening reception will be held at the gallery on Saturday, July 4, from 4 to 7 p.m.

Vaughn takes as her subject matter bodies of water from all across the world. By zooming in on and skillfully framing the reflections cast by various structures and objects—including buildings, boats, and flags—she creates stunning abstract images. “Optasia,” the Greek word for a vision or apparition, aptly captures what the artist calls “the sense of what I see in fleeting moments of the reflections I photograph.”

After two decades of making representational art, Vaughn relinquished recognizable manifestations of reality and embraced an array of cubist, abstract, and postmodern influences. “This bicoastal photographer,” a San Francisco Chronicle reviewer wrote, “has taken a pictorial cliché, reflections on the surfaces of bodies of water, and turned it into a means of generating compositions that echo classics of Surrealist and abstract painting.”

The rich colors and sinuous lines present in many of Vaughn’s works immediately recall, among other references, Joan Miró, whose paintings expanded the vocabulary of Surrealism. Her photograph *Pania*, for example, a minimalist, predominantly blue composition defined by an array

of amorphous shapes in primary colors, is reminiscent of Miró's *Blue* of 1961, which is rendered in an equivalent palette and similarly emphasizes relationships between size, form, and color.



"Pania" by Barbara Vaughn. Archival Pigment Print, 32 x 60 inches.

Many of the works on view as part of "Optasia" depict the Mediterranean Sea or, more accurately, the surface waters of its countless inlets and lagoons. Several works, including *Burano*, *Tessera II*, *Ifantos*, *Vicinato II*, were photographed on Burano, an island in the Venetian Lagoon known for the vibrantly colored houses that line its canals. Vaughn observed how the array of vivid hues combined with the simple architecture of the urban landscape created a unique color-blocking effect on the canal's mirror-like surface—an effect that she subsequently captured to magnificent effect in these photographs.



"Plotos" by Barbara Vaughn. Archival Pigment Print, 32 x 48 inches.

Venice has served as muse for Vaughn in another way: the city is home to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the unique modern art museum housed in a waterfront palazzo, the former residence of Ms. Guggenheim. The images Vaughn created in Venice are therefore not only in dialogue with the city's extraordinary atmospheric conditions and built structures, but also with iconic artworks by some of the 20th century's most lauded figures, including Alexander Calder and Constantin Brancusi.

The limitless gracefulness of Brancusi's groundbreaking sculpture *Bird in Space* (1932–40), for example, finds parallels in her work. Just as *Bird in Space* indexes a bird via its aerodynamic form rather than through particular distinguishing characteristics such as wings, feathers and a beak, Vaughn's reflections merely suggest specific referents. The fluidity of line in her work also bears the stamp of Brancusi's and Calder's influence, which finds extension in the buoyancy and balance evident in Vaughn's compositions. While the shapes and planes of Calder's mobiles gently float in the air, seemingly in defiance of gravity, the abstract forms in Vaughn's *Plotos*, *Korali*, and *Anodikos* have the appearance of soaring freely within unidentifiable spaces.



"Korali" by Barbara Vaughn. Archival Pigment Print, 59 x 82 inches.

A look at the in-situ shots for these works offers a “eureka” moment for the viewer, providing context and a visual explanation of the work’s abstract imagery. The subject is a part of reality, just a very small sliver that yields an abstract image.

Barbara Vaughn was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After earning her B.A. from Princeton University, she studied at the International Center of Photography in New York. Her work has been published in numerous books and periodicals, including The New York Times, Vanity Fair, Time, Vogue, and Art in America.

ABOUT QUOGUE GALLERY

Quogue Gallery was established in 2014 by Chester and Christy Murray, longtime art collectors and residents of Quogue. The gallery features contemporary emerging and established artists whose work includes paintings and prints, photography, glass, and sculpture. The gallery’s main focus is on displaying the work of East End artists who capture a mood, a color, or the extraordinary light that defines the East End. The artists do not necessarily represent the specific realities of the area, but rather have each been uniquely influenced or inspired by his or her surroundings. The gallery also exhibits modern and contemporary artists whose work fits within the gallery’s aesthetic. Recent exhibitions have included: “Emerson Woelffer: Works on Paper”; “Le Corbusier: Unité”; and “Shifting Tides: Photographs by Janice Mehlman.”

“Barbara Vaughn: Optasia” will be on view from June 26 to July 20, 2015 with an opening reception on Saturday, July 4, from 4 to 7 p.m. Vaughn’s work will also be on view at the Quogue Gallery space at Arthamptons from July 2 to July 5. Visit quoguegallery.com or arthamptons.com for further information.

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